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Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8254th meeting
Monday, 14 May 2018, 10.10 a.m.
New York

President:	Ms. Wronecka/Mr. Lewicki	(Poland)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Solíz
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Djédjé
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Esono Mbengono
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Tumysh
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands	Mr. Van Oosterom
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Sweden	Mr. Orrenius Skau
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Hickey
	United States of America	Ms. Tachco

Agenda

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2018/407)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2018/407)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Serbia to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Vlora Çitaku to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2018/407, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

I now give the floor to Mr. Tanin.

Mr. Tanin: As reflected in the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/407), the past period in Kosovo was generally characterized by a decline in both the quality of actions and the tenor of political discourse between Pristina and Belgrade. In March, tentative, but important, meetings of the dialogue facilitated by the European Union (EU) were held at the technical and political levels. That working atmosphere was affected when Marko Đurić, Director of the Serbian Government's Kosovo office and Belgrade's lead negotiator for the EU-facilitated dialogue, was arrested after entering northern Kosovo, against the advice of Kosovo authorities, to attend a session of President Aleksandar Vučić's internal dialogue. During the arrest, stun grenades, disabling gas and other acts of physical force were deployed, resulting in a number of injuries, including to an attending Minister of the Government of Kosovo, two municipal leaders, journalists and other attendees. Mr. Đurić was then theatrically and improperly paraded through a street in Pristina before being expelled from Kosovo. Many Kosovo Serbs, already unsettled by the unsolved murder case of Oliver Ivanović in Mitrovica in January, perceived such events with apprehension.

Following the incident, political figures from both sides engaged in an escalation of rhetoric that led to further setbacks in the effort to continue the EU-facilitated dialogue. The Kosovo Serb caucus, Serbian List, announced its intention to withdraw from Pristina's governing coalition. Moreover, it stated its intention to unilaterally form the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities, setting a deadline of 20 April, which, however, was subsequently recanted. Whatever factors drove the series of reciprocal taunts, the results seemed close to precipitating the collapse of the Government in Kosovo. The waters were only calmed again with intensive efforts, including with some support from external parties. Most important, significant efforts made by Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj and his Government, including protracted discussions with the Serbian List and other parts of the coalition, as well as the opposition, have helped to keep the channels of communication open.

There has been discussion over many months about the prospects of a shift in the essentially frozen positions of both sides through the new EU focus on the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina and on wider regional engagement. Despite those expectations, recent rising political temperatures have hampered the advancement of the dialogue, which requires sufficient political will from both sides to bring a new level of engagement to bolster the process. There is no other viable option. However, for that to happen, there is a clear need to exercise leadership to stand up to challenges, even with short-term political costs. A new focus by Brussels, at all levels, provides a mutually beneficial opportunity for Pristina and Belgrade to leave the current difficult moment behind and take the dialogue to the next stage of real progress. Moreover, member States of the European Union have set an ambitious calendar for the region, including the EU-Western Balkans summit in Sofia later this month — the highest-level regional summit since 2003. Additionally, the next crucial

meeting of the Berlin process economic forum in July, alongside many other initiatives this year to engage the Western Balkans more intensively, would help all to navigate cross-currents and take advantage of a new commitment.

As much as top-level political assurances remain essential, commitments made in negotiations are unlikely to endure without some impetus for confidence among communities and individuals at the grass-roots level. To create the atmosphere for reason and good-faith compromise to prevail, engagement is needed across all levels, which remains a main priority of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). I am pleased to inform the Council that I have just come from the United Nations Kosovo trust-building forum, held in Ljubljana from 6 to 8 May, which I opened alongside Assistant Secretary-General Bintou Keita. We were joined by representatives of the United Nations Kosovo team, the European Union, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Over 100 community leaders from throughout Kosovo came together to discuss ways to address common challenges caused by mistrust and stale political approaches, some 20 years after the height of conflict.

The starting point of the forum was simple: not to reinvent or reinterpret the past, but to illuminate, guide and pursue a more positive path for the future. Motivated and energetic individuals from across Kosovo society debated the prospects for trust-building through a wide range of positive action and cooperation. The main thematic areas were media accountability, access to impartial justice, economic growth, access to public services, religious coexistence and educational reform. Multiple focus groups worked to strengthen understanding across community divides. The resulting outcomes identified by participants provide a road map for measures to be implemented in Kosovo. Assistant Secretary-General Keita stressed that the forum was a proactive attempt to further the sustaining peace agenda, engage in prevention at the local level, as well as link political and developmental frameworks. I urged all leaders to organize the future, rather than mourn the past, and to move forward with more compassion, understanding and clarity in advancing trust in the areas of work they identified during the forum.

Important for Kosovo's European perspective, the Kosovo Assembly ratified the 2015 agreement on territorial delineation with Montenegro. That issue has been singled out by the European Union as a necessary step for Kosovo's integration with the EU, including visa liberalization, for quite some time. While the international community appreciated that achievement, it has been underlined that the strengthening of the rule of law and human rights and visible progress in the fight against corruption and organized crime remain major issues in meeting the aspirations of the people of Kosovo for their European perspective.

It is also important to acknowledge the approval of a new draft of the Kosovo criminal code, which introduces stricter penalties for offences related to corruption and misuse of official duty. That positive initiative complements ongoing efforts to depoliticize and enhance the performance of the judiciary. We also share the analysis about the effective application of human rights and the rule of law in Kosovo, as recently presented in the European Commission's annual progress report. It is in that context that Kosovo's rule of law institutions continue to be a major focus of both internal and external attention, as EULEX is preparing a significant reconfiguration that will transfer direct responsibility to the Kosovo court system for cases heretofore handled with EULEX in the lead.

Concerning the protection of cultural heritage, I am pleased to note that the Implementation and Monitoring Council, tasked with overseeing the treatment of special protected zones surrounding religious sites, has restarted its work. It is a timely development, as there have recently been attempts to undermine the judgements of Kosovo courts, as well as of those of the Monitoring Council, regarding construction near the Visoki Dečani Monastery, in western Kosovo. The international community will continue to closely watch the Government's actions in that case.

UNMIK continues to prioritize its own work in the areas of confidence-building, human rights and limited, but essential, aspects of support for rule-of-law and justice institutions. Crucial to the Mission's efforts are the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda and the youth, peace and security agenda. On 5 March in Kosovo, in collaboration with UN-Women, the Mission hosted the eighth Global Open Day on Women, Peace and Security. Focused on women's political participation, the event brought together more than 150 women political leaders from the central and local levels, including parliamentarians; Government officials;

representatives of the international community, civil society, academia and women's organizations; and youth activists. The Global Open Day recognized the need for women's full and effective participation in leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life. It also underlined the fact that women's political participation is indispensable to gender justice so as to end inequality, subordination, hierarchical status and asymmetries concerning political power. The event was central to the Mission's recently adopted gender framework strategy and part of a number of other important initiatives throughout Kosovo commemorating International Women's Day.

The youth, peace, and security agenda is also of paramount importance to UNMIK. Later this week, the Mission, while working together closely in cooperation with UNICEF and the United Nations Development Programme, will host the second United Nations Youth Assembly in Kosovo. The event will bring together 180 young leaders from diverse backgrounds alongside officials, civic organizations and business leaders.

In the multifaceted areas of the Mission's recalibrated work, UNMIK works fully in line with the core principles of Secretary-General Guterres' reform agenda and the guidance of the Council. Our efforts are aimed at sustaining peace; ensuring that we remain at the forefront of monitoring and analysing the situation; and reinforcing strategic cooperation with members of all United Nations entities, as well as international partners, in complementing the efforts of Kosovo's institutions. I thank the members of the Council for their continued support for our efforts and their support to the EU-led dialogue aimed at the normalization of relations and increased cooperation between Pristina and Belgrade.

The President: I thank Mr. Tanin for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Dačić.

Mr. Dačić (Serbia) (*spoke in Serbian; interpretation provided by the delegation*): I thank Secretary-General Guterres and his Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Mr. Zahir Tanin, for the report (S/2018/407) on the work of UNMIK and their committed engagement to the implementation of the mandate conferred upon the Mission by the Security Council under resolution 1244 (1999).

I will be open and straightforward in my statement. For some time now, while some members of the Security Council have called for decreasing the frequency of reporting periods and meetings on this topic, others have proposed a closed format for the meetings. Other radical ideas that have been put forward have included that the Mission be terminated and transformed into a political one. We understand some of those arguments. The Security Council agenda is congested, and the crises in Syria and Yemen are incomparable to the situation in Kosovo and Metohija. Yet I call on Council members to listen to my arguments and consider them as well.

The situation in Kosovo and Metohija has changed since 1999, but it is far from ideal. Clearly, based on all prior reports, Kosovo is neither the young democracy or the multi-ethnic society facing occasional challenges that some purport it to be. The reports raise very important questions, as does the situation on the ground. Has genuine reconciliation among communities occurred in Kosovo and Metohija? Have the perpetrators of all crimes been punished? Are the basic human rights of minority communities respected in Kosovo and Metohija? Have internally displaced persons been allowed to return? Regrettably, the answer to all of those questions is "no".

I will discuss the report before us and the events that took place during the reporting period in due time. Prior to that, however, I will point out several important facts that should be borne in mind by all of those calling for the termination of the Mission or decreasing the frequency of our meetings.

UNMIK has been present on the ground for 19 years and has done much to change the situation in Kosovo and Metohija. A great job has been done, but it has not been completed. A long road has been traversed since 1999. Much time was needed to bring the representatives of Belgrade and Pristina to sit at the same table and begin negotiations.

The first agreements were not easy to achieve, but they were achieved nonetheless. Although we have faced substantial problems in the implementation of the agreements by Pristina from the very beginning, we continue to believe that the only way to find a long-term sustainable solution is through dialogue, and that it must be resumed. I therefore believe that it is a duty and an obligation of the Security Council to help find such a solution and normalize the situation in Kosovo and

Metohija, which is — we must not forget — important for the stability of the entire region as well. Much effort has been made to stabilize the situation throughout the past years, and, only if we continue to address all open questions peacefully, can we expect to normalize the situation in the province.

We therefore must not allow all our efforts made thus far to be placed in jeopardy through hasty or unnecessary actions. That is why I call on members to look at the broader picture and support our efforts to arrive at a lasting solution together. Calls for downsizing UNMIK, reducing its budget, changing its mandate and reducing the frequency of Security Council meetings on the subject fall far short of contributing to the creation of a climate conducive to the achievement of those goals. They only add to the existing rifts both among the members of the Security Council and between Belgrade and Pristina. At this moment we do not need a back-and-forth on whether the Security Council should devote three hours every three months — 12 hours per year — to this topic. What we need is to implement all agreements without adding conditions and to find solutions to all unresolved issues exclusively through dialogue.

Let me say now a few words about the current report of the Secretary-General and the events that took place during the reporting period. Those events provide telling evidence that the situation in Kosovo and Metohija continues to be unstable and that an international presence is still very much needed. Members will recall our shock at the previous meeting (see S/PV.8176) at the brutal murder of Oliver Ivanović, the leader of the Civic Initiative "Freedom, Democracy, Justice" and one of the most prominent Serbian politicians in Kosovo and Metohija. The Pristina representatives vowed to leave no stone unturned until the perpetrators were brought to justice. The perpetrators have not been brought to justice. Furthermore, next to nothing is known about the investigation except that no progress has been made and that, due to the complexity of the case, the investigation has been taken over by the Special Prosecution Office of Kosovo.

Serbians in Kosovo and Metohija were shattered and deeply concerned by the news of the events that took place in northern Mitrovica on 26 March, when the talks under the internal dialogue on Kosovo were interrupted by a barbaric act committed by members of the Kosovo special police units. Armed to the teeth, they conducted a brutal raid on the building, using naked force against unarmed civilians. The dangerous, irresponsible and unacceptable behaviour of the representatives of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government was thrown into sharp relief. The Director of the Office for Kosovo and Metohija of the Government of Serbia, Marko Đurić, other Serbian Government officials, as well as Ministers of the provisional Government of Kosovo and Metohija from the Serbian community, deputies in the provincial Parliament and other citizens, 36 in all, were injured in the raid. One Serb, a Minister of the provincial Government, was detained in hospital for treatment.

Mr. Đurić, the main negotiator on the Serbian side, was apprehended illegally during the technical dialogue with Pristina. He was harassed, beaten, handcuffed and eventually dragged through the streets of Pristina in an orchestrated display of mob hatred. That was an unseemly act of humiliation unrecorded in the history of diplomacy. I hope everyone saw the footage of how Pristina treats the main negotiator of the Serbian side. How can Mr. Đurić be expected to sit again at the negotiating table in the wake of such treatment? Pristina sought to justify that behaviour by alleging that the visit of Mr. Đurić had not been approved. That is absolutely false. Notification of the visit, in line with the agreement on the arrangement of official visits made under the auspices of the European Union (EU), was sent in time. In fact, the notification was sent long before the deadline provided for by the agreement. EU representatives are informed in detail about this. It is difficult to understand that act as anything other than provocation by Pristina.

The event dealt a serious blow to the dialogue and undermines the peace and security not only of the Serbs of Kosovo and Metohija but also of the entire region. The event provides eloquent proof of the instability of the situation in the province and of the speed with which peace and security fall prey to irresponsible and one-sided acts. We were shocked by what happened in Kosovo and Metohija on that day, just as we were disheartened by the absence of a proper response from the European Union, the facilitator of the dialogue. In particular, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo is supposed to oversee the rule of law, including the conduct of Kosovo police. The Kosovo Force (KFOR) also turned a blind eye to the actions of the Kosovo special police units, notwithstanding prior agreements, according to which it should have prevented the members of the special police units from

coming to the northern part of the province, which has a majority Serbian population and which is where the sad incident occurred.

I would like to recall that I signed the Brussels Agreement along with Hashim Thaçi and Catherine Ashton. Before the Agreement was signed, we were at NATO headquarters in Brussels where then-Secretary-General Rasmussen took responsibility from KFOR to prevent the entry of any armed forces into a territory with a majority Serb population without approval. Why then did this incident happen? Threats and the use of force must not be tolerated under any circumstances; they must be clearly and unequivocally condemned by all the relevant international actors without reserve. I would also like to recall that Marko Đurić came to Kosovo to talk about the political solution of the Kosovo problem. He did not come to spark an uprising or to do anything that was contrary to the Brussels dialogue. Has anyone ever witnessed a diplomatic representative of any State receiving the kind of treatment observed in Pristina? This is the Head of the negotiating team who, several days ago, sat at the table with the other side, the way Council members are sitting here now. I invite Council members to imagine how they would feel if they were paraded in handcuffs through the streets of a town and then expected to talk about peace. It is clear what the intention was. We support the call in the report of the Secretary-General for a thorough investigation, with corrective action in case of failures to uphold human rights.

There should be great concern over Pristina's aspiration to change and expand the mandate of the so-called Kosovo Security Force. At a recent meeting in Skopje, I had an opportunity to hear Boyko Borissov, the Prime Minister of Bulgaria, who holds the current EU presidency, ask Hashim Thaçi if the incident had to occur in that way. Serbia responded with restraint. The aspiration to transform the Kosovo Security Force into an army should be a cause of great concern. That would not only be a flagrant violation of resolution 1244 (1999) and the Kumanovo Military Technical Agreement, it would also be a major step towards destabilizing the security situation in the province and the entire region. I would like to recall that the resolution does not provide for the establishment of a Kosovar armed force; it does, however, provide for KFOR as the only legal military force in Kosovo and Metohija responsible for all aspects of security in the province. Safeguarding KFOR's status neutrality and its undiminished presence is of paramount importance for the realization of its mandate.

Let me point out that the EU and NATO have not supported Pristina's intentions to establish an army of Kosovo, and I expect that they will continue to uphold their position consistently. I would like to draw the Council's attention to the fact that a number of countries, EU and NATO members, have accepted the accreditation of so-called Kosovo military attachés, in violation of resolution 1244 (1999). The resolution says that Pristina may not have an army or a ministry of defence or, for that matter, military attachés. Under what provisions of the Vienna Convention has this been allowed to happen? How can military attachés exist in an entity recognized as a State that does not have an army?

I would like to recall once again that Serbia is firmly committed to solving all issues through dialogue, and that we have demonstrated considerable political maturity and responsibility in the past year. Five years ago I personally signed the First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations between Belgrade and Pristina, the so-called Brussels Agreement. As I have already said, the Agreement was not at all easy to achieve and the obligations assumed under it were not easy to implement. Yet we implemented the majority of them, including the most sensitive political ones, such as the integration of the police and judiciary. Pristina also assumed its obligations by signing the Agreement, the most important of which is the establishment of the community of Serb-majority municipalities, mentioned in as many as six provisions of the Agreement.

I emphasize that that is the key part of the Agreement and the obligation that, despite repeated calls by the international community, Pristina has not implemented all these years. As a consequence, instead of analysing the achievements of the community over the past five years, we continue to talk about its establishment even today. The establishment of the community is of crucial and enormous importance for Serbia and Kosovo and Metohija Serbs, since it is designed to protect their vital interests, guarantee the preservation of their identity and improve their everyday life in Kosovo. Its establishment is not and must not be a gesture of goodwill, but a right achieved and guaranteed by all the signatories to the Brussels Agreement, including the European Union. It is not possible to implement agreements selectively and alter

them unilaterally. The community must be established in accordance with the Brussels Agreement, its principles and implementation plan.

Statements that may be heard from Pristina's representatives, such as the most recent one to the effect that the establishment of the community of Serb-majority municipalities is contingent upon the granting of a seat at the United Nations, confirms that Pristina has no real intention to fulfil its obligations under the Brussels Agreement and that it is grossly violating it instead. It is with regret that I note that the Head of European Union Office in Kosovo has violated its mandate by expressing her support for the Pristina platform, in wanton disregard of the Agreement on which the European Union put its seal. We have reason to believe that, five years later, Pristina is being disingenuous by embarking upon that process, notwithstanding making assertions that measures will be taken with regard to the community. We are afraid that that may very well be yet another political stratagem aimed at reducing international pressure, rather than genuine readiness to finally comply with the obligations that Pristina has assumed. It is therefore necessary that the Security Council calls in unison today for the establishment of the community of Serb majority municipalities without delay. Repeated calls to both parties to fulfil the obligations they have assumed are inappropriate since one side has already done so and the other has not.

To ensure compliance with and facilitate the implementation of the Brussels Agreement, maintain stability and establish the rule of law in Kosovo and Metohija, an international presence is essential. In that regard, the current EULEX competencies must be maintained. Nonetheless, potential changes must carried out under the watchful eye of the Security Council. It must be borne in mind that such changes would affect the work of other missions and that they too must change if they are to continue to function unencumbered. However, the transfer of EULEX competencies to the Provisional Institutions of Self-Governmcnt in Pristina would bring about a loss of the status neutrality of the Mission and underscore the phony statehood of Kosovo.

It would be remiss of me today not to mention the 200,000 Serbs and non-Albanians who have been expelled and the great number churches, monasteries and cultural and historical monuments that have been burned or destroyed. The report reveals that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees recorded three voluntary returns in the three-month reporting period. Council members heard that right — three internally displaced persons in three months out of the more than 200,000 expelled. Does the Council believe that that number is enough and that the international community should give up and stop creating conditions in Kosovo and Metohija to make it possible for internally displaced persons to return and realize their rights? That is the minimum we owe to all those who could not return to their homes in Kosovo and Metohija. Is the fact that only 1.9 per cent of internally displaced persons have achieved sustainable returns not a strong enough argument in favour of the continuation of UNMIK activities and of its strengthening?

The recent arbitrary arrests at the Jarinje crossing provide ample evidence of the violence the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government resort to and Pristina's lack of willingness to promote genuine democracy, the rule of law and respect for basic human rights and fundamental freedoms. Most often, secret lists, compiled mainly on the basis of false reports and fabricated evidence, are used to make those arrests. They are aimed at creating insecurity and fear among the Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija, affect their freedom of movement and discourage the return of internally displaced persons. The number of returnees can hardly be expected to increase unless systemic solutions are introduced to address the problems that plague them every day, which make for a long and woeful list indeed. In addition to arbitrary arrests, they include institutional discrimination, intimidation, failure to sanction national and religious hatred and ethnically motivated violence, personal and property insecurity and an absence of the rule of law.

I reiterate that the crimes committed in Kosovo and Metohija must not go unpunished. The process of confronting the truth is the first step towards reconciliation, but it is necessary that all those who committed crimes be made to account for them. For its part, Serbia has made significant steps in that direction. Conversely, the perpetrators of crimes against Serbs and non-Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija have not been punished, even 19 years later. Positions occupied by some individuals in the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government cannot and must not obstruct the pursuit of justice. It is a matter of grave concern for us that no indictment has yet been brought in the

Specialist Chambers for crimes committed by the Kosovo Liberation Army and that the beginning of the work of the Chambers continues to be postponed. In his reflections on his time as Specialist Prosecutor, David Schwendiman summed up that concern well.

> "Haste is no friend of justice, but neither is unreasonable delay. The further things get from when crimes were committed, the less credible efforts to address them are going to seem and the weaker the perception of their efforts as legitimate is going to be".

In upholding its laws, in full alignment with international law, Serbia will not desist from prosecuting persons for whom there is evidence that they have committed the criminal offence of war crimes against the civilian population in Kosovo and Metohija. The recent decision of INTERPOL to reissue notices for a number of individuals charged with the commission of crimes in Kosovo and Metohija is very important in that regard.

Serbia protects its national and State interests while fully respecting the tenets of international law, including, primarily, the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity. It will continue to use all diplomatic means against Pristina's secessionist attempts, which set a dangerous precedent already embraced, as we have seen, by separatist movements in other parts of the world. I am convinced that if perchance found in Serbia's situation, none of the members of the Council would act differently. All of Serbia's endeavours reflect efforts to protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity and, ipso facto, the authority of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the legally binding resolution 1244 (1999), which guarantees its territorial integrity and sovereignty and underlines the unacceptability of unilateralism as a way of resolving international relations issues. I would also like to mention that for some time now we have been borne witness to Pristina's attempts to join international organizations — the most recent have been its applications to UNESCO, INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization. Such attempts run counter to the basic principles of international law and unnecessarily politicize the work of those organizations.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all countries that have not recognized the unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo for their consistent support and principled respect of the Charter of the United Nations and resolution 1244 (1999), as well as those that have withdrawn recognition or are considering it. I would like to inform the Council that Suriname and Burundi have revoked their recognition of Kosovo. I would also like to advise the members of the Security Council who protest the withdrawals that their protests are not contributing to the quest for an efficient and effective solution to the problem. Unconditional support for one side is not a way to achieve compromise. We treat all Members of this Organization as friends and partners. Reciprocal treatment, including greater understanding of our position and arguments, would be welcome and is expected.

We were on the same side during both World Wars. On 28 July we will mark 100 years since the Serbian flag was first flown on the White House and all public buildings in the United States on the order of then President Woodrow Wilson to honour the enormous suffering of the Serbian people in the First World War. French President Macron is expected to visit Serbia this year. Along with President Vučić, he will unveil the renovated Monument of Gratitude to France, which was built to honour the historic alliance in the First World War. A summit of the European Union and the Western Balkans on the European future of our region will be held in London in July. Serbia wants to find common interests with Western countries. I hope that everyone knows that there can be no lasting peace and stability in the Balkans or in Europe without respect for the interests of Serbia and the Serbian people, as it is the largest State and largest nation in that region.

Serbia's policy is one of peace and economic links and prosperity. I therefore call on all of members once again to focus on seeking a compromise and sustainable solution to this decades-long problem, so that the entire Western Balkans may become a region of lasting peace, stability, security and mutual trust.

The President: I now give the floor to Ms. Çitaku.

Ms. Çitaku: As always, it is an honour to be with the Security Council today. Three months ago I was in the Chamber on the eve of the tenth anniversary of Kosovo's independence (see S/PV.8176). It has now been a decade of statehood for Kosovo, and much longer than that since the end of the war. We have been through a lot, beginning with a long period of oppression and systematic human rights violations prior to the war and culminating with ethnic cleansing. Despite the dire circumstances and daunting challenges, we never gave

up. With hope in our hearts we persevered, and we have managed to rebuild our lives from scratch.

The past three months have been marked by the anniversary of our independence and by reminders of the steep price we had to pay for our freedom. Every day there is a commemoration. Every day a new memorial is unveiled. From Meja to Cusk to Abria, in towns and villages all across Kosovo, people are united in remembering the noble sacrifices of the fallen.

Approximately 30,000 young Kosovars will graduate from high school this year. They will be the first generation of graduates who have not witnessed the horrors of war. They are the first generation of Kosovars to be born in a free country, to grow up without knowing the fear of oppression and without being scarred by war. They have no fear, because freedom is all they know. They were born free, and free they shall remain. What they demand from us is a better future, better quality of education and better jobs. It is what they deserve. However, they also demand truth about the past. In order to truly move on, they require closure.

But truth and reconciliation cannot be built on false narratives or on desperate attempts to establish moral parity. Every time I come here, to this Chamber, I feel compelled to remind Council members of our story, of what happened in the heart of Europe not more than 20 years ago: a brutal war that left hundreds of thousands massacred, missing or raped. All those atrocities — from Croatia to Bosnia to Kosovo — were committed by the Serbian State machinery. I am repeating these facts today, and I will continue to repeat them, because that is the only truth. It is very disturbing to hear the creative revisionist history of our northern neighbours. Their narrative is a serious attempt to rewrite the past, and as such has no place in this Chamber, or anywhere else for that matter, and it is about time that we put an end to it.

The States Members of the United Nations, our dear friends, should recognize the truth. This year Kosovo was omitted from the report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2018/250). International humanitarian organizations and local non-governmental organizations have collected an estimated 20,000 accounts of systematic rape and torture perpetrated by Serbian forces during the war in Kosovo. Despite the existence of substantial evidence, no perpetrators of those crimes have ever been brought to justice. Kosovo's experience with the survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and its efforts to address that issue are a valuable example to the global community. Beyond politics, we are speaking about basic human rights, which are expected to be respected universally and unconditionally. By turning a blind eye to those crimes we are creating the space for convicted war criminals to not only be represented, but to also abuse the public platform, and that has been happening in our neighbourhood. This is not a matter of my personal opinion, it is a concern raised by the EU Human Rights Commissioner, who said that

> "In recent years, war criminals from Serbia ... have been promoted as heroes and role models by Serbian Government officials, political parties and the media ... [and] this is unacceptable for an EU candidate country".

No wonder we see initiatives for the erection of monuments to a dictator like Slobodan Milošević.

I ask the Council, what does this say about the identity of a society, let alone about the normalization of relations with its neighbours? Surely, it says a lot about a commitment to the falsification of the facts when attempts are made to carve dictators in the stone. In this toxic environment, the infringement of free speech by the State feels very normal, as do the systematic threats to Kosovo Serbs who want to join the Kosovo Security Force or the Kosovo police. Several local Serbs from Kosovo were arrested in Serbia because they joined the Kosovo Security Force.

Let me be very clear on this matter: Serbia does not have a veto on the establishment of the Kosovo armed forces. That is a decision to be made only by the institutions of the Republic of Kosovo. With regard to the Serbs of Kosovo, it is evident that those people just want to live better lives and be integrated into their country. Nevertheless, their aspirations are steadily quashed by a Belgrade that disrupts on all possible levels, as they do on most issues.

Just the other day, the Serbian Government banned a Kosovo karate team from entering Serbia, thereby preventing our kids from taking part in the European Karate Championships being held in Novi Sad. Kids were banned. The Council knows how much effort Kosovo made to become a member of all sports federations, and how much joy it brings to our nation to see our sportswomen and men playing and competing on behalf of their country. Nonetheless, even today,

we still have to face all sorts of arbitrary barriers being put up by Serbia. However, in the spirit of true sportsmanship, young Kosovar athletes did not turn to anger or hatred, even during one of the most difficult and heartbreaking moments for them. Instead, they sent their best wishes to all other athletes who went on to compete.

That is not an isolated incident. It is part of a pattern of obstructionism exemplified by a statement made on 23 March by the Serbian Minister of the Interior, in which he indicated that he did not want to see clashes between fans and police over things they do not believe in and are contrary to their interests.

Unfortunately, it seems that with its decisions the Government of Serbia is supporting only the violent and destructive part of Serbian society, at the expense of those who value peace, support dialogue and cooperation and want to work, play and compete together. As stated jointly by the Youth Initiative for Human Rights in Kosovo and Serbia, it is violence that should be stopped, not sports. With complete confidence, I can add that sports was the sole motivation for our kids when they travelled to the border — they had no political aim whatsoever.

When we are given the chance to be present, to participate, to play and to compete, Kosovo excels, thanks to our athletes, artists and activists alike, who shine brightly and showcase our core values. Such is the case with Feride Rushiti, who joined the ranks of 10 extraordinary women from around the world to be decorated with the International Women of Courage Award this year. Dr. Rushiti is the founder and Executive Director of the Kosova Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims. Through almost two decades of research and advocacy, Dr. Rushiti has secured access to health care and justice for the civilian victims of the Kosovo war.

Our athletes are not the only ones to be turned away by the Serbian Government. A group of members of Kosovo's Parliament was recently banned from attending a regional conference in Belgrade — on Europe Day, of all days. The conference was supposed to foster regional cooperation and European integration.

The commitment of the Government of Kosovo to developing democratic, inclusive and effective governance that will serve the people of Kosovo without discrimination begins with the strong rule of law. Our institutions are committed to the rule of law. They are addressing the matter with a concrete approach, through the enforcement and implementation of the rule of law, accountability, effective institutional responsiveness and transparency. Our Government is focused on, and committed to, the full implementation of the Stabilization and Association Agreement and European Union (EU)-related reforms guided by the European reform agenda.

Kosovo's Parliament has now voted on the border demarcation agreement with Montenegro, thereby fulfilling the last remaining condition for visa-free travel within the Schengen Zone. While it was unfortunate to see that Serbian members of Kosovo's Parliament, under the constant threats and pressure from Belgrade, declined to vote in favour of the agreement, this is just another demonstration of Belgrade's manipulation of Kosovo Serbs. Serbs in Kosovo should be allowed to make their own choices, without threats from, or fear of, Belgrade.

Over the course of the past month, a number of Serbian Government officials have taken a series of intentional actions that violate the agreement between our two countries, which regulates the visits of officials and establishes procedures for such occasions. That campaign culminated with a public event hosted in Kosovo and attended by Marko Đurić. That was a clear violation, which was preceded by and followed by distinctly inflammatory rhetoric documented by public statements contrary to the spirit of normalization, dialogue, integration, peace and stability. As events unfolded, Kosovo police acted with professionalism throughout the entire process. Đurić's detention and subsequent arrest are standard procedure for law enforcement agencies. They are an inevitable outcome in response to any instance of such actions.

However, that particular violation was not an isolated act. Similar tactics flouting pre-established procedure and defiant of the authority of the Kosovo institutions have been employed by Serbian authorities on various occasions. I must therefore reiterate that Kosovo does not tolerate provocation and is committed to refraining from provocation itself. Serbian officials must understand that Kosovo can be entered only with the permission of Kosovo authorities. Should they fail to obtain such permission and nevertheless enter our country, Kosovo's institutions will respond by following procedure, in accordance with the Constitution and existing laws.

What would happen if, I or any Kosovar Government official, tried to enter Serbia without permission? Serbian Government officials, when they comply with procedure, visit frequently. Following the incident, Mr. Đurić visited Kosovo. Nothing happened, because he obtained the necessary permission and followed the procedures.

Kosovo is committed to normalizing relations with Serbia. We are committed to dialogue, the promotion of good neighbourly relations and the strengthening of peace and stability in the Western Balkans region. In just two days, our leaders will sit together as equals at the Western Balkans-EU summit. Now more than ever, it is crystal clear that the EU will not allow ambiguity to prevail in the region. Serbia must therefore ultimately recognize Kosovo's independence. Ultimately, it was at Serbia's request that the International Court of Justice ruled unambiguously on Kosovo's independence.

Kosovo's institutions launched a working group for the establishment of the association of Serbian municipalities. Unfortunately, owing to the intensive and extraordinary pressure exercised by the Government in Belgrade, there is a reluctance from the local Serbian population to participate in the process. What Belgrade wants is very clear. They want a territorial solution. On the other hand, we in Pristina want civil solutions. We do not believe that the creation of boundaries based on ethnic lines will contribute to peace and stability. Kosovo is a republic that belongs to all its citizens. While we hear numbers floated in the Chamber, let me remind the Council that only in the last elections, approximately 100,000 Serbs participated and voted.

Listing Kosovo's recognition as one of the top threats to Serbia's national security is delusional and harmful to Serbia itself. Kosovo is free and independent, and that will never, ever change. Let me also stress that it is misleading to characterize Kosovo's independence as a defeat for Serbia. Serbia has lost nothing, because Kosovo was never Serbian. Kosovo's independence has been sealed by our people's will, sacrifice and determination.

Allow me also to reiterate that we believe that the time has come for the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo to close. We also believe that the resources of the United Nations can be put to much better use. The Security Council can choose to maintain an expensive mission in Kosovo. However, the truth is that there is no role for it.

As I stated at the very beginning of my presentation, the people of Kosovo want to move on. They want closure. As we failed to deliver that, some of them have moved on and found peace on their own. They have risen above the painful past.

Arineta Mula's first hike was a long, steep trail over the accursed mountains as her mother and her three siblings fled for their lives in the spring of 1999 during Serbia's brutal war. She was only seven years old when she became a refugee. but the gripping fear that the Serbian forces would take her brother forced her to keep her feet planted firmly on the slippery and steep terrain. Sounds of artillery and blood stains accompanied her terrifying journey to safety. But Arineta decided to make something remarkably beautiful of that experience. She reckoned that Kosovo was too precious and our nature too beautiful to only be remembered and associated with the pains and horrors of war. Today Arineta is the first woman guide in Kosovo. She proudly walks the mountain peaks with tourists coming from Spain to China and elsewhere in the world, thereby breaking the boundaries set by politics. Arineta resolved that her trail of escape would become a trail of hope for a better life and a better tomorrow — a hope that every single Kosovar carries in their heart.

The President: I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Ms. Tachco (United States of America): I thank Special Representative Tanin for his briefing and for all the good work that he and his team do on the ground. I also want to thank Ambassador Çitaku and Foreign Minister Dačić for their participation today.

The United States strongly supports Kosovo, its independence, its sovereignty and its integration with Europe and the broader international community. Given the reality of Kosovo's independence, which is recognized by the majority of States Members of the United Nations, we call on Serbia and Kosovo to work with the utmost determination towards lasting peace and reconciliation.

The United States underscores its support for the Brussels dialogue. We greatly appreciate the European Union (EU) for its leadership in that effort. The EU's continuing engagement and guidance will ensure that both countries make progress towards the normalization of Kosovo-Serbian relations. We urge the leaders of both sides to seize this opportunity to demonstrate true

political will and to work together to reach agreement as soon as possible.

Normalization demands that both countries follow through with the full implementation of their commitments under the Brussels dialogue. We welcome Kosovo's launch of the process to form the association of Serb-majority municipalities, and we look forward to continued work in cooperating on that important and long-overdue task. We also look to Serbia to fully cooperate and to engage in order to finalize the implementation of the energy agreement. The long delays with regard to the agreement have negative effects not only for ordinary citizens in Kosovo but also throughout the region and Europe.

The United States commends Kosovo's ratification of the agreement on border demarcation with Montenegro, which represents a political milestone and a key step towards full visa liberalization with the European Union for the benefit of all Kosovo citizens. However, the United States joins the Secretary-General in expressing concern over the increased tensions between Belgrade and Pristina, which can undermine efforts to maintain regional stability and the safety of citizens in both Kosovo and Serbia. The 26 March events surrounding the arrest of Marko Đurić in Mitrovica are an example of that. We urge all parties to avoid provocation and to focus on normalizing relations through dialogue.

Additionally, we note with concern the increased tension in the Kosovo Serb community following the killing of the Kosovo Serb politician Oliver Ivanović. We continue to support a full and impartial investigation by Kosovo's institutions and call on them to work with urgency and with Serbia's full cooperation so as to bring the perpetrators to justice. We also urge Serbian institutions to investigate the threats against Kosovo Serbs who have joined the Kosovo security forces and are making an important public-service contribution. Rhetorical threats and legal actions against the Kosovo Serbs who have integrated into Kosovo's institutions are contrary to the spirit of the dialogue and must cease.

As we have stated before, the Council must take corrective action on its outdated approach to the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). The Mission is long overdue for drawdown and closure. The upcoming negotiations in the Fifth Committee on mission budgets will serve as a reminder of the Security Council's critical need to instil fiscal discipline, responsibility and leadership in the United Nations. The nearly $38 million requested for the UNMIK operations does not make sense. While we appreciate the work of Special Representative Tanin and his team, UNMIK continues to live past its purpose, and we must wind it down. The reporting period for UNMIK should be extended to 6 or 12 months, with fewer meetings of the Council. The Council spends as much, or more, time on UNMIK as it does on missions operating in volatile security environments that are crucial to maintaining stability and protecting civilians. We must reorient the Security Council's time and efforts to pressing peacekeeping concerns. We welcome recent expressions of support for fewer UNMIK briefings, and we ask for Council agreement on that change.

Finally, we continue to support Kosovo's membership is all relevant international organizations, including the United Nations. We strongly encourage all INTERPOL members to support Kosovo's membership at that organization's general assembly in November. Kosovo meets all the criteria for membership, which will enhance the international law enforcement community's collective ability to combat terrorism, violent extremism, trafficking, cybercrime and other criminal activity in the critical Balkan region. We also call on United Nations States Members that have not yet done so to join the more than 110 Member States that have publicly recognized Kosovo as an independent State.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Ambassador Zahir Tanin, for his comprehensive briefing on the latest developments in Kosovo. I welcome the presence of Serbian First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affaris His Excellency Ivica Dačić and thank him for his remarks. I also thank Ambassador Vlora Çitaku for her statement.

We took note of what Ambassador Tanin said at the very outset of his statement regarding how much the quality of dialogue between the two parties has deteriorated.

Our position on the issue at hand has always been consistent and clear. We would like to reaffirm our support for a responsible handling by the two parties of the challenge they face and for the peaceful and

amicable resolution of all outstanding issues between Belgrade and Pristina in accordance with the Brussels Agreement so that there may be reliable and sustainable peace between the two parties, which can happen only when there is justice for all and rights are respected. We welcome the ongoing efforts made by the European Union (EU) in facilitating the dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo, as well as its efforts to advance peace and stability in the region.

In that regard, we are encouraged by the high-level engagements by the European Union during the reporting period, including the high-level visits to Belgrade and Pristina in the months of February and March. We also welcome the resumption of the EU-facilitated dialogue and call on Belgrade and Pristina to continue demonstrating good faith and positive commitment to the dialogue with a view to normalizing relations.

The ongoing efforts being made to operationalize an integrated Kosovo judiciary are a welcome step. However, we are concerned with the slow progress on the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo. We therefore encourage the implementation of all existing agreements, in accordance with the Brussels Agreement.

We are deeply concerned by the heightened tension and deteriorating relations following the unfortunate incident of 26 March. The concerns expressed by the Special Representative are indeed fully justified. It is our hope that leaders in both Belgrade and Pristina will continue to engage in dialogue in good faith and maintain a positive and constructive spirit with a view to addressing outstanding issues and disagreements through peaceful means. That requires that both sides refrain from actions and statements that could cause ethnic discord, and exert efforts to create an atmosphere of trust and confidence conducive for dialogue.

Ethiopia fully supports the work that UNMIK has been undertaking in discharging its mandates in line with resolution 1244 (1999). Its engagement and support to promote inter-community reconciliation and confidence-building measures in the reporting period is commendable. Recent developments have indeed made it imperative that UNMIK continue to discharge its responsibilities.

It is our hope that UNMIK will continue to promote political dialogue, strengthen community reconciliation and ensure security and stability in Kosovo and the region. We also recognize the significant role of the European Union on matters concerning Kosovo, and we commend the European Union Rule of Law Mission and the Kosovo Force for its valuable contribution in Kosovo in the areas of the rule of law and security.

In conclusion, I would like to state that security and stability in Kosovo and the region will ultimately be ensured when there is political will and resolve on the part of both parties. In that respect, we once again encourage both parties to remain committed to dialogue and negotiation with the view to finding a mutually acceptable solution.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia thanks the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Mr. Zahir Tanin, for its informative briefing and for his work. We express our appreciation to and welcome the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, Mr. Ivica Dačić, and Ms. Vlora Çitaku for their statements.

Bolivia calls for the implementation of resolution 1244 (1999), including respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of the Republic of Serbia. That resolution remains fully in force, requiring ongoing supervision by the international community. In that context, we reiterate that any attempt to transform the security forces of Kosovo into an armed force would be in contravention of resolution 1244 (1999) and of international law. We call on the authorities of Kosovo to refrain from such action.

At the same time, we view with great concern and condemn the violent acts during the 26 March visit by the Director of the Office of the Government of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija, Marko Đurić. We urge the authorities of Kosovo to avoid such occurrences, and on both parties to refrain from inflammatory rhetoric, which does nothing but detract from any future arrangement between Belgrade and Pristina and undermine efforts to build trust between the parties. Likewise, we call on the authorities to investigate those events.

Furthermore, we express our concern regarding the slowness of progress in the investigation into the assassination of Mr. Oliver Ivanović, leader of the Civic Initiative "Freedom, Democracy, Justice" party. As long as the investigation stalls, efforts intended to build trust between the communities of Kosovo will

continue to be undermined. We therefore call on the relevant authorities to redouble the investigation into the events that culminated in the assassination of the Kosovo-Serb politician on 16 January.

With regard to the Kosovo Specialist Chambers and the Specialist Prosecutor's Office, we reiterate that the rule of law and its impartial application are essential to fight impunity. Perpetrators of war crimes must answer for their actions, regardless of their condition or origin. In that connection we hope that the authorities of Kosovo fulfil their responsibilities and obligations pursuant to the agreements reached.

Bolivia values the efforts carried out by the European Union and the mediation of the High Representative of the European Union for External and Security Affairs aimed at advancing the implementation of existing agreements. In our view, it is important that the parties comply with the commitments undertaken in the negotiations under the auspices of the European Union. In that regard, we encourage them to impart new energy to the dialogue process, which seems to have stalled after a brief resumption.

We also call on the parties to work towards a peaceful solution through dialogue and in compliance with the obligation to negotiate, as stipulated in international law. Along the same lines, the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo, set forth in the Brussels Agreement more than four years ago, should be established in accordance with that Agreement; failure to do so would contravene the Agreement. We call on the Kosovo authorities to respect what was agreed and make progress in that regard in order to ensure the security and rights of Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija.

We appreciate the work done by UNMIK in accordance with its mandate within the framework of resolution 1244 (1999). We encourage the Mission to continue to work on building confidence between the parties, to resort to good offices to ease tensions, to use peaceful means to seek consensual solutions and to promote political dialogue and respect for rights in safeguarding peace, as provided for in the Charter of the United Nations.

We also commend the work that UNMIK continues to do through its engagement with municipal authorities and representatives of the Kosovo province in protecting the rights of communities, promoting intercommunity reconciliation, strengthening the rule of law, bolstering interethnic cooperation and facilitating the return of internally displaced persons, as well as its work in providing document certification services. In particular, in the past period, we wish to highlight the importance of its work on gender equality and the activities carried out on the occasion of International Women's Day.

Finally, in line with the Secretary-General's statement in his latest report (S/2018/407), we call on the international community to contribute to the trust fund established to implement community-assistance projects to benefit the Roma, Egyptian and Ashkali minority communities affected by lead poisoning in Kosovo, in order to meet their needs in terms of health, economic development and infrastructure.

Mr. Hickey (United Kingdom): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Tanin for his briefing.

In February, the United Kingdom celebrated 10 years of diplomatic relations with Kosovo. In the same month, the European Commission adopted a strategy for a credible enlargement perspective for the Western Balkans. Kosovo's opportunity here was not overlooked. Through implementation of the Stabilization and Association Agreement, Kosovo has an opportunity to progress on its European path.

We welcome the significant milestones that Kosovo has reached since our previous meeting (see S/PV.8176), including the ratification of the border-demarcation agreement with Montenegro. Good-neighbourly relations are a key feature of any European democracy, and crucial for stability in the wider Balkans region. We encourage both Serbia and Kosovo to continue to make progress towards a sustainable solution through the European Union-facilitated dialogue. Progress is vital for stability, security and prosperity in the region, as well as in the two countries themselves. Provocative acts and rhetoric from both sides are deeply unhelpful and antagonistic.

Our priority in Kosovo remains strengthening the rule of law, and challenges remain. We welcome President Thaçi's public commitment to upholding Kosovo's obligations through the Specialist Chambers. We also welcome the speedy appointment of Jack Smith as Kosovo's Specialist Prosecutor, as well as the continuity that provides in the Specialist Chamber's pursuit of justice for victims.

We note that Prime Minister Haradinaj has requested a review into the arrest and deportation of Turkish nationals. As a supporter of democratic values, Kosovo must continue to give priority to the rule of law and respect for international human rights in all its institutions.

The investigation into the death of Oliver Ivanović is clearly ongoing. We have been clear in our expectation that Kosovo's rule-of-law institutions will lead a thorough and full investigation to bring those responsible to justice at the earliest opportunity. But, equally, we expect Serbia to refrain from any provocations that could heighten tensions and to support investigative efforts in an open and constructive manner.

The hard work and dedication of thousands of personnel of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) has helped to bring peace to Kosovo. The current situation is in part a result of their work. We also recognize Kosovo's commitment to peace, stability, reconciliation and prosperity. The United Kingdom will continue to be a proud supporter of Kosovo as it strives to achieve its full potential.

Given the scale of the threats to international peace and security around the world right now and the relative stability and progress on the ground in Kosovo, it is clearly inappropriate and inefficient for the Security Council to spend so much time discussing the situation in Kosovo and devoting so many resources to it. The United Kingdom joins other European members of the Council in firmly believing that the situation in Kosovo allows for a substantial reduction in the current cycle of reports and meetings. We further believe that the Security Council must refocus UNMIK's efforts so that the means deployed by the United Nations are tailored fully to the situation on the ground. To this end, we look forward to a strategic review of the Mission in due course.

Mr. Esono Mbengono (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin by thanking Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for his briefing on the progress made over the recent months in Kosovo. I also wish to thank both His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, and Ms. Vlora Çitaku for their statements.

As reflected in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/407) and in Mr. Tanin's briefing, the situation in the Kosovo region continues to be complex and fragile. In that regard, resolution 1244 (1999) remains relevant and provides the main legal basis for resolving the issue of Kosovo. The Republic of Equatorial Guinea respects the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Republic of Serbia and appreciates that country's continued efforts to facilitate an inclusive, peaceful and political solution to the situation.

We would particularly like to highlight the resumption of the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, facilitated by the European Union, which we hope will assist in the implementation of the such key provisions of the Brussels Agreement as the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo. We would also like to commend the various initiatives undertaken with the assistance of UNMIK and the United Nations team on the ground, which have been carried out to foster dialogue, trust and partnerships between the parties, with a view to building peace and security and sustainable development. Ensuring security and stability in Kosovo requires efforts of both parties to continue the dialogue, which is why we encourage them to continue their endeavours aimed at achieving stability on the ground, while respecting the implementation of the agreements reached.

Against that backdrop, we also share the concerns identified in the report with respect to the recent escalation of tensions between Pristina and Belgrade, which could affect peace and stability in the Balkans. Equatorial Guinea finds it unacceptable that Mr. Marko Đurić, Director of the Office for Kosovo and Metohija of the Government of Serbia, was arrested and detained during his visit to Kosovo on 26 March. Similarly, we are concerned about the slow progress of the investigation into the 16 January murder of Kosovo Serb politician Oliver Ivanović. We call for prompt investigations into those two events. Those challenges only damage the trust generated among the various communities and increase the risk of violent extremism and social instability, which make societies more vulnerable to conflict.

For those reasons, we call on the parties to intensify their efforts to improve the rule of law, promote development, peace and security in Kosovo and safeguard good relations of trust among communities living in Kosovo.

The issue of Kosovo is complex because of the existence of such sensitive issues as national reconciliation, which involve the well-being of individuals and the protection of the rights of all populations and communities in Kosovo. The parties in conflict must therefore refrain from any action that could increase tension, and instead give priority to those that will strengthen peace and confidence, which will undoubtedly influence the quest for a final solution that is satisfactory to all.

We believe that all parties must continue to act in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and within the framework of resolution 1244 (1999) and existing agreements, so that through dialogue they can find a peaceful and lasting solution for the benefit of all. In that regard, Equatorial Guinea supports and commends the mandate of UNMIK and the support it provides to all communities in Kosovo. Similarly, we appreciate the efforts undertaken by the European Union in pursuit of a just solution to the situation in Kosovo.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): First, let me thank my good friend Ambassador Tanin for his comprehensive briefing. We continue to welcome the good cooperation between the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and its international partners, such as the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo. I will focus on three points today: the future of UNMIK, the dialogue facilitated by the European Union (EU) and the rule of law.

First is the future of UNMIK. Like other European Union members of the Security Council, we firmly believe that the situation in Kosovo allows for a substantial reduction of the current reporting cycle. We furthermore believe that the Security Council should refocus UNMIK's efforts so that the means deployed by the United Nations are tailored fully to the situation on the ground. In that light, we look forward to a strategic review of UNMIK, as suggested by Poland in our February meeting (see S/PV.8176).

Secondly, I turn to the EU-facilitated dialogue. We commend High Representative Mogherini for her continuous efforts in that process. The resumption of discussions in March was an important step towards the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina. It should be stressed that in both countries such dialogue requires sincere political will and a united effort to achieve concrete results. We call upon the Serbian and Kosovar authorities to move beyond the present tensions and prove their commitment to the dialogue by continuing discussions and implementing agreements reached thus far.

My third point is the importance of the rule of law. For peace to become entrenched in the fabric of society, Kosovo must protect and promote the rule of law and hold accountable those who have committed crimes. In that regard, we note recent steps taken by Kosovo to reform its judiciary, but we stipulate that many more need to be taken. The Netherlands is the host country of the Kosovo Specialist Chambers and the Specialist Prosecutor's Office. In that context, we express the hope that Kosovo will do everything to uphold its commitments and obligations.

We are encouraged by the recent ratification of the territorial delineation agreement between Kosovo and Montenegro. We take that as a sign of Kosovo's continued commitment to peace, reconciliation and good neighbourly relations.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We appreciate the convening of this meeting and the comprehensive briefing delivered by Mr. Zahir Tanin on the situation in Kosovo. Peru takes note of the statements made by Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, and Ms. Vlora Çitaku, Ambassador of Kosovo to the United States.

We note with concern the tensions of recent months. We stress, however, the existence of a strong and comprehensive framework, provided by resolution 1244 (1999) and the Brussels Agreement, to maintain peace and stability in Kosovo and the region. In that regard, we welcome the timely resumption of the political dialogue process facilitated by the European Union, and the meetings held by the technical negotiation teams. We also welcome the ratification by the Kosovar Parliament of the territorial delineation agreement with Montenegro — a development that promotes stability and the normalization of relations in the region, which, in turn, should lead to concrete benefits for Kosovar citizens.

On the other hand, we are concerned about the recurrence of incidents such as the arrest of the Serbian politician, Marko Đurić, in Kosovo and the lack of progress in the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities in the country. We consider it necessary for the Kosovar

authorities to deal with such sensitive issues with greater diligence.

Similarly, we believe that it is necessary to uphold and strengthen the rule of law and confidence in institutions. That is essential to prevent a new conflict and consolidate sustainable peace. We therefore note with concern the lack of progress in the relevant investigations into the assassination of the political leader Oliver Ivanović.

We also note the need for the Kosovar authorities to cooperate fully with the Specialist Chambers and the Specialist Prosecutor's Office, which are responsible for prosecuting the allegations of heinous crimes that occurred during the conflict in Kosovo. We would like to highlight the important work of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, in particular in the promotion and protection of human rights. We welcome its training programmes for the Kosovar police and encourage the early adoption of the new criminal code.

We also consider it important to move towards sustainable peace by addressing the root causes of the conflict, promoting reconciliation and policies aimed at recognizing and including minorities and addressing the needs of internally displaced persons. We believe that women and young people should be called upon to play a decisive role in rebuilding the social fabric and creating a shared vision of the future. We welcome the initiatives organized by UNMIK to promote greater participation by women and young people in political and social processes. On the other hand, we must reject and deplore the illegal destruction of protected cultural heritage, as well as hate speech that fuels intercommunal tensions.

We would like to conclude by expressing our support for the work of UNMIK, as well as for the Kosovo Force, the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in their efforts to help build sustainable peace in Kosovo and the region.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Zahir Tanin, for his comprehensive briefing to the Security Council on the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) (S/2018/407). The State of Kuwait fully supports the Special Representative in his activities and values the vital role that the United Nations has played over the past period in helping Kosovo to build its institutions in accordance with relevant Security Council resolutions, notably, resolution 1244 (1999). I would also like to welcome Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, and Ambassador Vlora Çitaku. I thank them for their briefings.

I will focus my remarks on the political and security developments in Kosovo.

First, I will address the political developments. The State of Kuwait acknowledged the independence of the Republic of Kosovo in 2013. We support all efforts by the Republic of Kosovo to strengthen its security, stability, rule of law and justice system, as well as its ongoing efforts to build up its State institutions. We support its efforts to integrate with the European Union, and we call for stepping up the work to resume dialogue led by the European Union and implement all agreements between Kosovo and Serbia to reach lasting solutions to issues between the two parties so as to ensure good-neighbourly relations and strengthen regional stability and security. We commend the steps taken by Kosovo to accelerate the implementation of the European Union reform agenda, especially with regard to the ratification of the agreement signed in 2015 with Montenegro on the demarcation of the two countries' shared border.

We welcome the resumption of the European Union-facilitated dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina at the technical level. We urge the two parties to commit fully to honouring all their obligations within the framework of that dialogue, in particular with regard to the establishment of the association of Serb-majority municipalities as a first step towards strengthening trust between the two parties. We welcome efforts to create a comprehensive judiciary in Kosovo in line with the agreements between Belgrade and Pristina. The European Union-facilitated high-level dialogue therefore remains the optimal framework within which to settle pending issues between the two parties and the only way to reach just and sustainable solutions.

Secondly, with regard to security developments, we are concerned about signs of deteriorating relations between Belgrade and Pristina, especially following the arrest of the Director of the Office for Kosovo and Metohija of the Government of Serbia, Mr. Marko Đurić, on 26 March. We call on both parties to avoid all provocation and inflammatory rhetoric. We urge the authorities in Belgrade and Pristina to continue to

address all matters of concern through dialogue and to demonstrate the necessary political will so as to ensure the full normalization of relations between both parties. We express our concern about the slow progress being made in investigating the assassination of the Kosovo Serb politician Oliver Ivanović, on 16 January. We believe that trading accusations will undermine mutual trust among communties throughout Kosovo.

The international community must step up its efforts to encourage Pristina and Belgrade to overcome all their differences and reach sustainable and just solutions that are acceptable to the two parties to ensure peace and stability throughout the region. We encourage UNMIK to continue its active cooperation with Pristina and Belgrade, and all communities in Kosovo to strengthen stability, security and human rights.

Mrs. Gueguen (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, as well as the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, Mr. Dačić, and the Ambassador of Kosovo, Ms. Çitaku, for their briefings. Considering the situation described by the Special Representative, I will underscore three points.

First, the commitment of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) to promoting security, stability and respect for human rights in Kosovo and the region must continue to be commended. In particular, France welcomes UNMIK's activities involving bringing together communities and promoting the women and peace and security agenda, together with UN-Women. As the members of the European Union who sit on the Security Council have underscored, we must continue to be attentive to the realignment of UNMIK's work so that United Nations resources can be fully adapted to the situation on the ground. At a time when there is debate concerning the future of peacekeeping operations, it is our responsibility, as members of the Security Council, to attend to such adaptation, as well as to the coordination of the work of UNMIK with that of other international actors in Kosovo.

Secondly, the strategy for European Union engagement with the Western Balkans published on 6 February attests to the commitment of the European Union countries with regard to the countries of the Western Balkans. The strategy clearly recalls the European perspective concerning those countries, while emphasizing the work that is expected of them so that they might move forward in that direction. France stands steadfastly with Kosovo so that it can pursue its development efforts and the progress made over the past 10 years, deal with issues facing it and meet the needs of the Kosovar people. We call on the Kosovar authorities to pursue reform efforts with a view to consolidating Kosovo's institutions and its economic and social development, and on all political forces to work towards building political consensus on key issues for the country's future. We firmly condemn the use of violent means, such as the use of tear gas, to disrupt the functioning of Parliament.

The Council knows of our commitment to the consolidation of the rule of law in Kosovo, which must be pursued, as well as to the struggle against corruption and organized crime. We welcomed the significant development represented by the ratification of the territorial delineation agreement with Montenegro on 21 March, which was the result of a difficult process and will contribute to strengthening good-neighbourly relations at the regional level. The report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/407) also highlights the positive work done by the Kosovar authorities to further protect victims of sexual violence.

Lastly, France regrets that, since this past January, several incidents have cast a shadow on the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. My country calls on each party to refrain from any action or statement likely to provoke tensions and to try to resolve their differences through dialogue so as to create an environment sustainably conducive to the progress that remains to be made. The Serbian and Kosovar Presidents expressed their willingness to move forward towards the conclusion of a comprehensive agreement on the normalization of relations between Serbia and Kosovo. That commitment must be underscored. Despite difficulties that might arise, that path must be resolutely followed. France fully supports such a perspective and the work carried out to that end by the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Ms. Mogherini.

We noted with interest the resumption of efforts by Kosovar authorities to draft the statute of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities, which is one of the fundamental commitments provided for in the Brussels agreements. France believes that the comprehensive normalization of relations between the two countries is the only way forward for the two countries and their future generations and — as was

recalled in the European Union strategy — a prerequisite for moving forward on their respective European paths.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China thanks Mr. Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for his briefing. We welcome the presence and statement of Mr. Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia. I have also listened very carefully to the statement by Ms. Çitaku.

Tolerance, reconciliation and peaceful coexistence serve the fundamental interests of all ethnic communities in Kosovo and are necessary for achieving development. Currently, the situation in the Kosovo region continues to face complex challenges. China hopes that the parties concerned will always put the well-being of their people first, protect the legitimate rights and interests of all communities, refrain from actions and rhetoric that could escalate the situation and work together to safeguard the peace, stability and development of the Balkans.

Resolution 1244 (1999) provides an important legal basis for resolving the issue of Kosovo. All parties should act in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and, within the framework of relevant Security Council resolutions, seek a solution that is acceptable to all parties through dialogue and negotiations.

China respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia, understands Serbia's legitimate concerns about the question of Kosovo and commends its efforts to pursue a political solution thereto. China welcomes the efforts of Belgrade and Pristina to continue to enhance dialogue. We hope that the two sides will reaffirm their firm commitment to a political solution, implement existing agreements, gradually build mutual trust, contribute their political will and wisdom and meet one another half way so as to create conditions for finding a lasting solution that is acceptable to all parties concerned.

The Security Council should maintain its attention on the question of Kosovo and encourage both parties to undertake sincere dialogue so as to promote a proper settlement of the Kosovo question. China supports UNMIK, under the leadership of Special Representative Tanin, in discharging its mandate and cooperating constructively with all parties. We hope that UNMIK, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo and the Kosovo Force will work in close collaboration to play a constructive role in improving the situation on the ground and achieving a proper settlement for the Kosovo question.

Mr. Tumysh (Kazakhstan): We join others in expressing appreciation to Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo, Mr. Zahir Tanin, for his briefing on the reporting period. We also thank His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and Ms. Vlora Çitaku for their updates. Today I wish to speak on five points.

First, there are still a number of sensitive issues left to be resolved, such as the lack of inter-community trust and a large number of persons still missing. An issue of some concern is the incident that took place on 26 March concerning Mr. Marko Đurić, Director of the Office for Kosovo and Metohija of the Government of Serbia. We also note with regret that no progress has been made in the investigation of the January murder of Serbian activist Oliver Ivanović. Of equal critical importance is the protection of vulnerable groups, including Roma and Ashkali, and of cultural heritage and diversity in Kosovo.

Secondly, we commend steps taken by the parties under the auspices of Ms. Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, to discuss the implementation of the agreements by way of holding a series of technical and high-level meetings in Brussels in February and March. We fully support her call for action to urgently establish the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities.

Thirdly, we would like to refer to women and youth. In that vein, the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, remains a matter of high importance. Special attention must be paid to the role of women as actors for peace and security. They need to be actively involved in political life and the decision-making process. There is also a need to implement resolution 2250 (2015), on youth, peace and security, and to provide full support and access to youth of all ethnicities to education and skills development to fulfil their potential. Young people have great power to prevent conflicts and to promote trust and peace.

Fourthly, we welcome the activity of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo during the reporting period, including the arranging of nearly 40 confidence-building measures to promote inter-community cooperation and trust, with the engagement of representatives of the Government, the opposition, civil society, women and youth, media and religious organizations in different parts of Kosovo.

Fifthly, we support the whole-of-pillar approach in Kosovo, since neither peace and security nor development can be achieved without good governance, the rule of law, criminal justice, institutional and human rights-related reforms, including the fight against corruption and organized crime. Above all, we highlight the importance of the nexus between security and development, the potential for which should be created through utilizing an innovative revamped regional approach and a more efficient, transparent and accountable modus operandi of the United Nations, delivering as One United Nations at Headquarters and on the ground.

Lastly, we believe that peace and stability in Kosovo could be achieved if the parties follow agreements, focusing on promoting inter-community dialogue and trust, mutual respect and understanding.

Mr. Djédjé (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation thanks Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for the quality of his briefing on the situation in Kosovo. We also welcome Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, and Ms. Vlora Çitaku, Ambassador of the Republic of Kosovo to the United States of America.

I will focus my remarks on both the progress made and the challenges remaining in relations between Serbia and Kosovo since the previous report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/76). My delegation notes with satisfaction the ratification by the Kosovo Parliament, on 21 March, of the Montenegro border demarcation agreement, which is an important step in the normalization of relations between the two countries. My country appreciates the fact that the political parties have managed to overcome their differences despite the violent actions of some opposition parties in attempts to derail the process.

My delegation also welcomes the holding, on 23 March in Brussels, under the auspices of the European Union, of the high-level meeting between the political authorities of Pristina and Belgrade, as part of the political dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo. My delegation hopes that that kind of meeting will continue to happen, in the interests of reconciliation and the final settlement of the Kosovo question. In that respect, Côte d'Ivoire would like to reaffirm its support for the continuation of the political dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo under the auspices of the European Union.

Despite some progress, my delegation remains concerned by the signs of continued tension between Belgrade and Pristina, including the arrest and subsequent expulsion, on 26 March, of Mr. Marko Đurić, chief negotiator and representative of Kosovo Serbs, from northern Mitrovica. My delegation urges Serbia and Kosovo to give priority to constructive dialogue and to refrain from any unilateral action that could jeopardize the prospects for a peaceful settlement of the dispute between the two countries. My delegation also calls on them to observe good neighborly relations. In that regard, my country welcomes the mediation efforts of the European Union, whose representative, Ms. Mogherini, travelled to Belgrade on 27 March to meet with the Serbian leadership in order to discuss the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina.

My delegation also remains concerned about the slowness and lack of tangible results in the investigations into the 16 January murder of Oliver Ivanović, leader of the Civic Initiative "Freedom, Democracy, Justice". We recall the importance of consolidating the rule of law in the framework of the fight against impunity.

Turning to the situation in Kosovo, Côte d'Ivoire again calls for the implementation of the agreement establishing the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo, which will undoubtedly be a major source of appeasement and easing of the sociopolitical climate. My delegation urges the Kosovo political authorities to demonstrate the necessary political will to remove all obstacles to the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo.

In conclusion, my country once again welcomes the work done by UNMIK to stabilize the situation in Kosovo and to bring the various communities together. My delegation urges Serbia and Kosovo to give priority

to dialogue in order to find solutions to the problems that hinder their good-neighbourly relations, as both countries have the duty and the capacity to make the Balkan region a stable and prosperous region where their respective communities can live in peace and harmony with respect for their political, ethnic and cultural diversity.

Mr. Safronkov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, Mr. Zahir Tanin, and his team for their work and objective assessment of the situation in Kosovo. The Mission continues to play an important role in the province. We also acknowledge Mr. Tanin's personal efforts. We also welcome the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, Mr. Ivica Dačić, to today's meeting. We agree with the Minister as he expressed serious concerns about the situation in the province. We also support the determination of Serbia's leaders to resolve all issues through civilized dialogue. We listened very carefully to Ms. Çitaku's statement.

According to our assessment, the situation in Kosovo is not only not stabilizing; on the contrary, it is deteriorating. Negative factors continue to accumulate. The situation requires constructive diplomatic efforts and strict international control, primarily through the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), in particular since we understand that the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) has plans to leave the province.

No progress has been made to date in the investigation into the murder of a well-known Kosovo-Serb politician, Oliver Ivanović. Much time has elapsed since 16 January, the date on which the crime was committed. However, thus far we have heard no credible information about the results of the investigation. We are therefore left with the impression that the authorities in Pristina, after they tried and failed to put the blame on Serbia, decided to simply forget about the investigation. But the truth must be determined as soon as possible, and the Security Council must be apprised of it.

In addition to that tragedy, on 26 March there was another egregious incident in Kosovo and Metohija — the brutal, humiliating and violent arrest of the Director of the Serbian Government's Kosovo office, Mr. Marko Đurić. As a result of that staged and cruel provocative act, scores of people were beaten. That kind of unprovoked violence on the part of the Pristina's special forces calls into question the already fragile peace in the province. Bloodshed was prevented only because the Serbs behaved responsibly. Such lawlessness against Serbs in Kosovo illustrates a deplorable situation with respect to law enforcement and human rights. It is drastically different from the rosy, but virtual, picture painted by those advocating the independence of the province. In that regard, we are puzzled about the blatant permissiveness on the part of the international presence — the Kosovo Force (KFOR) and the EULEX. They stood idly by, observed from the sidelines and refused to act to ensure to public order and safety.

We believe that that kind of intimidation against Serbs in Kosovo and the suppression of their determination to protect their legitimate interests is very dangerous and can lead to the resurgence of armed clashes in Kosovo. It could also destabilize the Balkans as a whole. The line chosen by Pristina serves only to inflame the situation and undermines the long-lasting efforts of the international community in the area of post-conflict settlement. We would like to address and call upon those with influence over Pristina to put pressure on those they support to de-escalate tensions.

Regrettably, we are witnessing exactly the opposite. Pristina believes it can act with impunity, with full permission to do so. Contrary to resolution 1244 (1999), it continues to prepare for the transformation of Kosovo's current security forces into a full-fledged army. It is being assisted by certain NATO contingents in KFOR, which by doing so go beyong the United Nations mandate. The closed Bondsteel base is being used for those purposes in particular. Kosovo-Albanian fighters are being prepared for active combat. We would like to warn the Council that, in the interest of peace and security in the Balkans, it is important to halt the creation of a force that hot-headed entities will employ against Serbs in the province.

We also have questions about the complete closure of the Bondsteel base. Its establishment was based on the importance of ensuring an international presence under the United Nations mandate, within the framework of resolution 1244 (1999). The international community has the right to information about the kind of military activity conducted at the base. Who is being trained there and for what purposes? What kind of exercises are being conducted? We believe it would be logical to

include that kind of information in the quarterly reports about the United Nations Mission in Kosovo.

We are also concerned about the information we received some time ago from NATO with regard to the fact that the KFOR command will halt contact with Russian representatives. What is being hidden from a permanent member of the Security Council by an international entity that is in Kosovo on the basis of the United Nations mandate? We hope that reason will prevail and that that erroneous decision will be reviewed.

The Russian position on Kosovo remains unchanged and is based on the international legal frameworks that are reflected in resolution 1244 (1999), which remains the cornerstone of the Kosovo settlement. We are of the view that the Kosovo issue can be settled only through politics or the basis of negotiations between parties in the spirit of goodwill and international law. Regrettably, we must acknowledge that dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina has been discredited.

More than five years have elapsed since the Brussels Agreement was signed but the key obligation contained therein, which was reached under the auspices of the European Union, namely, the establishment of the community of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo, has still not been implemented. We bear witness to laxity on the part of the European Union, the international mediator. It did not compel the Kosovo Albanians to implement agreements achieved under their own auspices. As a result, Pristina openly undermines the implementation of its own commitments and refuses to abandon its own unrealistic demands. In contrast, we witness a constructive approach by Belgrade to tackle the Kosovo issue in the statement made by President Vučić citing his readiness to reach a compromise. At the same time, we are therefore concerned about increased pressure on the Serbian leadership and attempts to compel Belgrade to acknowledge the de facto independence of Kosovo. We hope that a Brussels dialogue will be spared such pressure and ultimatums. Failing that, we cannot expect to have success in the form of a long-term solution acceptable to all.

We believe it is untimely to push forward and link the so-called full and comprehensive normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina to an artificial timeline. First, we must fully implement earlier agreements, without which the already weak trust among the members of the negotiating process could disappear altogether. The implementation of the agreement concerning the establishment of the community of Serb-majority municipalities is at the centre of our attention.

We must note that no practical moves have been made with regard to Specialist Chambers in The Hague to investigate crimes committed by the Kosovo Liberation Army. Eight years have passed since the publication of the Marty report on the issue. That is another serious problem. We believe that it is not constructive to delay the start of the work of that body under artificial pretexts. We expect that the Specialist Chambers will start its work in the very near future and be as transparent as possible. All those who committed terrible crimes, including trafficking in human organs, must face justice and be justly punished, regardless of their current positions. To replace Mr. Shwendiman, who retired on 7 May, American lawyer, Mr. Smith, has been appointed to the position of Prosecutor. We hope that he will quickly assume his post and finally produce tangible results in the form of specific indictments.

The rate of refugees and internally displaced persons to the region is also unsatisfactory. As indicated in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/407), only three people returned to Kosovo during the reporting period. For some that truth is unpleasant, but it is still the truth.

Attacks on homes and property of Kosovo Serbs, arson, physical trespass and acts of vandalism continue. We must pay particular attention to ensuring proper protection for the Orthodox sites in Kosovo — churches and monasteries. We must also put an end to the destructive practice of denigrating sensibilities and humiliating Serbs and other minorities in Kosovo. We should not turn a blind eye to acute issues and problems, such as in the area of counter-terrorism and combating corruption and crime, but we must actually address them. The situation with regard to those issues is very worrisome.

In the current situation, the international community, with the leading role played by the United Nations and represented by the Security Council and the United Nations Mission in Kosovo, should pay more attention to the situation in Kosovo and actively contribute to the maintenance stability and security in the region. Given those and other current circumstances, we consider the calls to reduce the frequency of reviewing the situation in Kosovo at the Secutiry Council to be completely inappropriate.

Allow me to remind those who ignore this fact that UNMIK was created by the Security Council, and only the Security Council has the authority to make relevant decisions in that regard. Unilateral statements are null and void.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that the Western Balkans, with its rich history and potential, can, and should, become a region for cooperation and interaction, rather than tension and hostility. However, in order to achieve that, we must abandon the logic of confrontation and the practice of presenting countries in the region with the false choice of: Are you with or against us? As in many other parts of the world, what we need there is collective work on the basis of mutual respect. The Russian Federation stands ready for that.

Mr. Orrenius Skau (Sweden): I would like to begin by thanking Special Representative Zahir Tanin for his briefing today. I would also like to thank Deputy Prime Minister Dačić and Ambassador Çitaku for their statements to the Security Council.

As others European Union (EU) members of the Council have already stated, the situation in Kosovo calls for a substantial reduction in the frequency of the reporting cycle. We should also refocus the efforts of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) so that the means deployed by the United Nations are better tailored to the situation on the ground. To that end, we look forward to the strategic review of the Mission.

Kosovo's European perspective was reconfirmed in the European Commission's strategy for a credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced European Union engagement with the Western Balkans, which was adopted in February. The EU-Western Balkans summit, which will take place later this week in Sofia, will offer another opportunity for both sides to reaffirm their political commitment to advancing these efforts.

We welcome the progress made since our previous meeting (see S/PV.8176), in particular the ratification of the territorial delineation agreement with Montenegro by the Assembly of Kosovo, which represents an important breakthrough. We share the Secretary-General's assessment that the ratification is an indication of Kosovo's commitment to its humanitarian perspective.

Moving forward, it is now important to resume a dedicated reform agenda and to intensify the fight against corruption and organized crime. To that end, we encourage the Government and the opposition to engage in constructive dialogue to overcome political deadlocks and to enable the acceleration of necessary reforms.

It is also crucial that Kosovo's political leadership continue to respect the rule of law and human rights. In that regard, we are concerned over the recent arrest and expulsion of Turkish nationals without customary court proceedings, and we are concerned about the slow pace of progress in the investigation of the murder of Oliver Ivanović.

The continued deadlock in the normalization dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo must be overcome. The future of both lies within the European Union, and the normalization of relations is vital for a stable, peaceful and prosperous Western Balkans. We call on Pristina and Belgrade to implement their commitments and to inject new impetus into the dialogue process. As we have stated before, the status issue must not hamper Kosovo's European perspective or membership in international organizations.

Sweden welcomes the important work being undertaken on women and peace and security in Kosovo. That includes support to wartime survivors of conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence, and women's political participation. We reiterate the importance of the role of women in the normalization process.

The United Nations and UNMIK have made invaluable contributions to help bring Kosovo to where it is today. However, the EU integration process, including through the support of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, now provides the most appropriate framework to deal with remaining challenges. By continuing to work towards Kosovo's European perspective, with support from the EU and the international community, Kosovo's leaders can deliver on the expectations of their people for a better future.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Poland.

At the outset, let me thank Special Representative Zahir Tanin for his briefing. I would also like to thank Deputy Prime Minister Dačić and Ambassador Çitaku for their statements before the Security Council.

I would like to join my European colleagues in saying that we believe that the situation in Kosovo allows for a substantial reduction of the current

reporting cycle. We furthermore believe that the Security Council must refocus the efforts of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) so that the means deployed by the United Nations are tailored fully to the situation on the ground. In that light, Poland also reiterates the need for a strategic review of UNMIK. Twenty years have passed since the Mission's establishment and, in our view, it is time to reassess its relevance.

Poland has recognized Kosovo as an independent State and we have confidence in Kosovo's ability to resolve its problems. I will now briefly focus on three points.

First, I would like to stress the importance of the continuation of the European Union-facilitated dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, which should lead to a legally binding agreement on a comprehensive normalization of relations. Moreover, I would like to highlight that the decisions already made within the dialogue should be swiftly implemented. That is a prerequisite for both countries on their path to European integration.

The second point that I would like to make is on the importance of the rule of law. We stress the need for the Kosovo authorities to respect their obligations to support the work of the Specialist Chambers. We trust that they will continue to do so. We also note Kosovo's efforts to bring the justice system up to international and European Union standards. The law on courts and the law on the disciplinary responsibilities of judges and prosecutors, which were recently adopted, are important steps in that direction. The support in the area of the rule of law delivered in recent years by the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo was of the utmost importance.

Thirdly, and finally, let me welcome the ratification of the demarcation agreement with Montenegro. It is a crucial step towards visa liberalization with the European Union and towards further stabilization of the region. Let me conclude by saying that Poland regards Kosovo as being fully capable of managing its own future and exploiting its potential within the shared framework of European values.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

Mr. Dačić has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Dačić (Serbia) (*spoke in Serbian; interpretation provided by the delegation*): I am not going to engage in polemics with Ms. Çitaku, as that is not my intention. In the first place, as I have already said many times, I would like these meetings to be constructive, and therefore, again, I will not comment on what she said — although I could do so, of course, as could she.

Moreover, I would like to add something to what I heard from the representatives of some of the countries present here. I am glad that the 10-year anniversary of the independence of Kosovo and the establishment of diplomatic relations was mentioned, particularly by the representative of the United Kingdom. But I would also recall that last year marked the one hundred and eightieth anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Serbia and the United Kingdom. The first British Consul to Serbia was George Lloyd Hodges, appointed in 1837. I hope that is also gratifying, in addition to the 10 years of diplomatic relations with Kosovo.

In addition, I would like to recall that next year we will observe 180 years of diplomatic relations with France, as ties were established in 1839. This year also marks 180 years of diplomatic relations with the Russian Federation, beginning in 1838. In 1881 — 137 years ago — we established diplomatic relations with the United States. In 1899 — 119 years ago — we established diplomatic relations with the Netherlands. I am referring exclusively here to the Kingdom of Serbia, not Yugoslavia. In 1917 — 101 years ago — we established diplomatic relations with Sweden. And we established diplomatic relations with Poland 99 years ago.

Therefore, I would like to recall that we are an old State with which Council members have traditional and friendly relations. In fact, as one exits the United Kingdom's Foreign and Commonwealth Office one can see a mural, erected after the First World War, that depicts Britannia with children representing Belgium and Serbia as the countries that made the largest contributions and had the largest number of victims in the war. We lost 40 per cent of our male population in the First World War. Consequently, I would ask the Council to consider those aspects when talking about our relations and our problems — all the more so considering that these issues are very difficult and painful to us.

I ask the Council to show greater understanding for our desire to be partners with every member. We have a long-standing tradition of diplomatic relations, several centuries. I also ask the Council to remember that history and what Serbia did for its allies in the First and Second World Wars. I do not want to delve too far into the past, as some might accuse us of dwelling there, but one cannot make plans for the future based exclusively on respect for Kosovo's interests. Serbia is willing to compromise, but that means respecting the interests of both sides.

Many countries in the world are facing problems similar to Serbia's. They are now reviewing their decisions to recognize Kosovo for those very same reasons — because they are now facing their own separatist movements. How can they recognize these principles in one situation and not in another? One could perhaps say that Kosovo is sui generis. Anyone can say that their case is sui generis. Moreover, this is not a fight for self-determination or freedom, because the Albanians in Kosovo are not a people who did not have a State of their own. They are a national minority that lived in Serbia. Albanians, as a people, have already exercised their right to self-determination by establishing a State of their own — Albania. The fact that diplomatic relations were such that Kosovo was recognized as an independent State does not mean that the same determination will prevail in, say, 20 years, when the same problems appear at one's door.

We do not wish conflict. Serbia is a serious country, an old country that shaped international order over several centuries for Christianity, for Europe and for the world at large. That must be taken into account when other countries are called upon to recognize Kosovo. I would never call upon other countries to violate any other country's territorial integrity. We would like to be partners with all countries, but partnership also implies that we should remember that in this country and in the United Kingdom 100 years ago, Serbian Day was observed during the First World War. I can bring a poster of that to the next meeting of the Security Council.

Has anything changed for the British people over the past 100 years? Probably, but the same thing happened in the United States. All of us here must be aware that these are not lies, but rather historical facts that can be researched. That is why, in Serbia, we will erect a monument to Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States, who clearly defined the relationship of his country to Serbia — the largest victim of the First World War — as a country that was included in Wilson's 14 points and one that made a huge historical mistake by creating Yugoslavia and enabling others to break free from other occupiers. That is an error that we will have to pay for. I ask the Council to consider that.

The United Kingdom says that it is glad to commemorate 10 years since the independence of Kosovo, but I have not heard that Great Britain is gratified to have enjoyed 170 or 180 years of diplomatic relations with Serbia. The same is true of other countries as well. Serbia is the only country in the world that has a monument in honour of France. We love France as France loved us.

This is history. Some will say that history is not important. However, those that have a history cannot possibly say that; only those that do not have a history can.

The members of the Security Council have a history. I would therefore like to thank them for everything that they said — whether good or bad for us. Everyone has the right to choose their own future. We understand that there are no long-standing friends or enemies, but there are in fact long-standing friends. Do not break old friendships because of new ones.

The President: Ms. Çitaku has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Ms. Çitaku: I will try to be very brief.

First, many members of the Security Council raised the issue of the murder of Mr. Oliver Ivanović. On behalf of the Kosovo Government, I want to reiterate that we will leave no stone unturned until we find the perpetrators of that terrible crime. Mr. Ivanović was a citizen of Kosovo. He was among the few local Serbian leaders who spoke openly about Pristina as the capital of the Serbs living in Kosovo. He spoke openly against intimidation and the threat to which local Serbs were subjected by the authorities in Belgrade. We ask for the cooperation of all the parties. I hope that I will soon come to the Council with results.

Secondly, I need to reiterate that Kosovo's independence is not the product of a secessionist movement. Kosovo's independence is the product of the non-consensual dissolution of Yugoslavia — a union that no longer exists. I urge whoever has any doubts about the legality of Kosovo's independence to read the advisory opinion of the International Court

of Justice (see A/64/881). The opinion was clear and unambiguous. It is true that Kosovo is a very young State, but we are also a very old nation. We can point to any given date in history. We have always existed. We are Europeans and we are proud of the friendships and alliances that we have with all members. I hope that Kosovo will soon establish diplomatic relations also with Serbia.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.